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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Housekeepers' Chat Wednesday, April 24, 1929

Not for Publication

Subject: "The Value of Fish in the Diet." Menu and recipes from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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The Menu Specialist has planned another fish dinner for us today, with Lemon Meringue Pie for dessert.

Do you know why fish is included so often in the Menu Specialist's meals? Because fish is one of our most valuable foods. Fish, and shellfish, especially the salt-water kinds, both fresh and canned, are the best known source of iodine. Iodine is a mineral needed to keep our bodies normal and healthy. Lack of iodine leads to one form of the disease known as goiter.

Just last week I read that New Jersey people seldom have goiter, because they eat heartily of the nearby and plentiful supply of salt water fish, which on account of its iodine content, is an excellent preventive of goiter.

Some time ago scientific workers discovered that there was a goiter belt throughout the inland states. In these states there is a deficiency of iodine in the soil, and consequently in the drinking water, and in the vegetables grown in the soil. So you see there's a "good health" reason behind a fish dinner.

When I was a child, we lived in a state which was far removed from the sources of fresh fish, and the fish we had came from cans. But nowadays our markets sell not only canned fish, but fresh and frozen fish fillets, in package form.

Last year I told you about the tons and tons of fish which are being cleaned and boned in fillet form, and then wrapped in parchment paper to be rushed to our markets. These fish are minus head, scales, tails, fins, and bones, when they reach the housewife. Among the varieties of fish now being sold as wrapped fillets are haddock, cod, halibut, flounder, and sole.

Something still newer in package fish is the frozen fish fillet -- fillets in whole or cut form, frozen by a new process and packed in sanitary sealed packages of transparent, waterproof wrapping paper, or parchment paper, or in sealed cartons.

"These fillets are so rapidly frozen, at low temperatures, that the flesh cells do not break, the juicy texture and flavor of the fresh fish are retained, and no bacteria can grow -- in fact, all the qualities of the pure, fresh ocean

fish are fixed. These frozen fish fillets can be cooked just as they come from the package. Frozen cod, haddock, mackerel, smoked haddock, and sole fillets are now being distributed in frozen form."

With such a wide variety of canned fish, as well as fresh and frozen fish fillets, and smoked and salted products, there is no reason for omitting fish from our weekly diets.

I shall talk about fresh fish now, since the main dish on our menu is broiled fresh fish. It is rather difficult for me to advise you what kind of fish to buy, for of course I do not know what fish are sold in your nearest market. The home manager, who gives her family appetizing, well-balanced meals, at not too high cost, always makes the most of things in season, in her locality. She studies her local market, and finds out when different kinds of fish, and shellfish are at their prime. Of course there are a few standbys, like salmon, cod, halibut, haddock, bass, trout, flounder, perch, oysters, clams, and scallops, which are in season somewhere practically every month.

The Menu Specialist doesn't suggest any particular fish for our menu, but I believe she was thinking about shad when she planned this meal. Write the menu please, and then I'll give you directions for broiling fresh fish. The menu: Broiled Fresh Fish; Spring Onions on Toast; Mashed Carrots; and Lemon Meringue Pi .

Now let's take the directions for broiling fish:

To broil fish, place it skin side down on a greased pan, or baking sheet, if you are going to cook it under a gas flame. If you are going to broil it over hot coals, place it in a greased broiler. Fish should always be broiled at medium temperature for a comparatively short time, so it won't be tough and dry. In using a gas flame, turn it fairly low, and place the fish far enough from the flame so that it will cook rather slowly. A four pound fish will require from 25 to 40 minutes, depending on how thick it is. Just before it is done, place it closer to the flame, to give a golden brown. Slip the broiled fish gently onto a hot platter, add a little melted butter, and serve with it some slices or sections of lemon.

Shall I tell you why I think the Menu Specialist had shad in mind? Because last Sunday morning she was invited to breakfast at the Recipe Lady's house. And the piéce de résistance of the meal was shad.

The Menu Specialist told me it was the most delicious shad she had ever eaten, without exception.

"The Recipe Lady called it broiled shad," said the Menu Specialist, "but it was more soft and juicy than any I'd ever encountered before. The secret was that she put the fish in the upper part of the oven, first, at moderate heat, for about 30 to 40 minutes. Then, when it had cooked through (it was a very large, fat shad), she put it under the broiling flame of the oven just long enough to make it golden brown all over the surface."

Well, I'm sure it must have been a delicious shad. If the Recipe Lady knew how much I like fresh broiled shad, she might have -- but then, it isn't nice to hint for invitations to breakfast on Sunday morning, is it?

The next recipe is for Buttered Spring Onions on Toast. If you have never served Buttered Spring Onions on Toast, you'll be agreeably surprised at the way they are received. Better provide a good supply. Allow six or seven finger-sized onions for each serving. After trimming the green tops from the onions, cook them until tender, in salted lightly boiling water, in an uncovered vessel. Fresh young onions will be done in about 20 minutes. When they are tender, drain them, add more salt if needed, and season with melted butter. In the meantime, toast slices of bread. Arrange the onions on the toast as you would asparagus, and serve at once, with the fresh broiled shad.

You'll find the recipe for Lemon Meringue pie in the Radio Cookbook. Let's repeat the menu: Broiled Fresh Fish; Spring Onions on Toast; Mashed Carrots; and Lemon Meringue Pie.

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Thursday: "Preserving Eggs for Home Use."

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